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Subject: EQS definitions

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Dear Esteemed Committee Members,

I write in support of proposed revisions regarding Education Quality Standards, as outlined in correspondence from the Jewish Communities of Vermont (JCVT.) I was a signatory to the initial letter from the Jewish Communities of Vermont (JCVT.) We are seeking that EQS define Ethnic Studies and Ethnic Groups as they are defined in the law, so that the EQS envelopes, at the very least, all the groups the Vermont Legislature has decided that children need to learn about including those of "Middle Eastern descent" and "groups that have been historically subject to persecution or genocide."

As the JCVT (Jewish Communities of Vermont) has represented, "Jewish Americans, most of whom immigrated to the United States in the last century, are a multi-racial and multi-ethnic religious group sharing a common ancestry, indigenous liturgical language, traditions and histories of oppression.

Jewish people arrived in the United States from all corners of the world including the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe, with the United States one of the world's largest Middle Eastern Jewish diasporic communities.

A racially diverse people -- Asian, Black, Latino, and White to name a few -- Jews of all races, ethnicities, and nationalities share a culture and language developed by our ancestors more than 3,000 years ago.

Sadly, we also share a long history of persecution and genocide, most recently the Holocaust 80 years ago, where 6 million Jews were murdered because of their race, and the forced exile of almost a million Jews from North Africa and the Middle East making them dispossessed refugees after that.

Discrimination against Jews continues in America today. While only half of our nation knows that antisemitism exists according to a recent American Jewish Committee survey, sixty-four percent (64%) of our nation's religious- based hate-crimes are directed at the 2% Jewish population making it the most prevalent in that category and accounting for 9% of all hate crimes in our nation."

Along with my rabbinic colleagues, I call for the EQS Rules Committee to ask the State Board of Education to reject or rewrite sections of Act 1 without legislative authorization.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Amy Small

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